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A
S E R M O N

Occasioned by the DEATH

OF THE REVEREND

Mr. *Thomas Saunders*:

Preached at *KETTERING*,
AUGUST 8, 1736.

By *DAVID SOME*.

L O N D O N :

Printed for RICHARD HETT, at the *Bible*
and *Crown*, in the *Poultry*; and sold by
Mr. RATTEN, of *Market-Harborough*; and
Mr. DICEY, in *Northampton*.

MDCCXXXVI.

[Price 6 d.]



I COR. XV. 10.

*Not I, but the grace of God
which was with me.*

THE glorious Head of the Church has furnished some Ministers with such distinguishing Abilities, that they appear as ¹ Stars of the first Magnitude, in *his right hand*, and are so eminently ² burning and shining lights in their Generation, that they attract not only the Eyes but the Admiration of Multitudes. Yet the most eminent amongst them should not boast of their Attainments, since it is God who makes them ³ to differ, and they have nothing but what they have received; and if they have received it, *why* should they glory as if they had not received it?

THE Apostle Paul insists on this Argument in the former Part of this Epistle, and proposes it to the serious Consideration of the *Corinthians*. They were ⁴ enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge, and were not inferior to other Christians in any spiritual Gift; but as they were ready to over-value themselves on these Accounts, he reminds them from whence those Indowments came, that they might not be *puffed up*, but might always entertain a sober and modest Opinion of themselves. And he cultivated in his own Soul the same humble Temper which he re-

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commended

¹ Rev. i. 20.
⁴ 1 Cor. i. 5.

² John v. 35.

³ 1 Cor. iv. 7.

commended to others, that the peculiar Favours which the Redeemer had conferred upon him, might not exalt him ¹ *above measure*. He was a ² *chosen vessel, separated from his mother's womb, and called by the Son of God* ³ *to bear his name before the Gentiles and kings, and to preach him among the Heathen*: But he was not formed for that honourable Employment by personal Converse with Jesus while he was on Earth, and therefore he looked upon himself as ⁴ *one born out of due time*. And as he was called after the other Apostles, so he thought himself ⁵ *the least* of them, not worthy to be numbered among them, especially because he had *persecuted the church of God*. In other respects he was not a ⁶ *whit behind the chiefest* of his Order; but these abasing Circumstances made such a deep Impression upon him, that he esteemed them far ⁷ *better than himself*. This excellent Man was ⁸ *cloathed with humility*, and that amiable Dress was his Ornament and Glory, and added a distinguishing Lustre to all the Gifts and Graces with which God had enriched him. This Humility led him to admire the Grace of God, and to ascribe all that he was, and all the Good that he did, unto it; without it he was nothing, with it he was sufficient for all the Labours and Sufferings devolved upon him as an Apostle of Christ. And this Grace that *was bestowed upon him*, ⁹ *was not in vain*, for he *laboured more abundantly than they all*: But lest he should seem too assuming in that Expression, he gives the Glory of his Services to the great Cause of them, and readily owns that it was not he alone who performed them, but the *grace of God which was with him*.

THE

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 7.² Gal. i. 15.³ Acts ix. 15.⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 8.⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 9.⁶ 2 Cor. xi. 5.⁷ Phil. ii. 3.⁸ 1 Pet. v. 5.⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

THE *Grace of God*, in the strict and proper Notion of it, signifies the divine Favour, appearing in many Instances, and producing different Effects, which may very fitly have the same Appellation given them, because they proceed from that Cause. This Grace was ¹ *exceeding abundant* in the Commission given to *Paul* ² *to preach amongst the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*; in his Qualifications for the Execution of it, and in the wonderful Success with which his Labours were crowned; and therefore he had been very ungrateful, if he had not, on all Occasions, owned his great Obligations to it. And they who now ³ *serve the Lord faithfully in the gospel of his Son*, will heartily concur with the Apostle in acknowledging its Power and Efficacy. If they are acquainted with themselves, and consider Things in that just Light in which they are represented in the holy Scriptures, their Thoughts will work after the same manner, and they will speak the same Language. In the midst of their Days, when they are arrived to the highest Pitch of Honour and Usefulness, but more especially when they have almost ⁴ *finished their course*, and *the time of their departure is at hand*, in a strict and humble View of their Labours, they will say, with this *holy Apostle*, and with our *dear Brother*, who recommended these Words to our Consideration on this solemn Occasion, *Not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.*

IN discoursing on this Subject, I shall,

I. INQUIRE how, and to what Purposes, the *Grace of God* is with Ministers.

II. I SHALL

¹ 1 Tim. i. 14.

² Eph. iii. 8.

³ Rom. i. 9.

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

II. I SHALL draw some Inferences, from what shall be offered under that Head, by way of Improvement.

I. I AM to shew how, and to what happy Purposes the *Grace of God* is with Ministers.

WE may indeed, in the general, assert, That all true Christians partake of a rich Variety of Blessings which flow from the Grace of God as the Fountain of them ; they are ¹ *justified freely* by it *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, their Hearts and Natures are sanctified by its powerful Influences, and by the same ² *Grace* they hope to be finally *saved*. And if Ministers have some satisfactory Evidences that they are of that happy Number, they, with all their Brethren in the Lord, must refer the Glory of their Salvation, as well as Usefulness, thither, and lay down the Crown there. But there are some peculiar Benefits which they receive from this Grace, in regard to their Office and Station in the Church of Christ, which are not common to all Christ's Disciples.

I. DIVINE *Grace* fits them for their Work.

THIS Work of theirs is very difficult, and will require great Abilities for the Management of it : Immortal Souls are the Objects of their Care ; it is their Business to seek their Good in this present Life, and to shew them the Way to Happiness in that which is to come. They should awaken the Secure, instruct the ³ *Ignorant*, and those *that are out of the way*, and endeavour ⁴ *to turn Men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God*. And if God succeed their Attempts

¹ Rom. iii. 24.

² Eph. ii. 5.

³ Heb. v. 2.

⁴ Acts xxvi. 18.

Attempts for the Conversion of Sinners, and they are ¹ *begotten through the gospel*, there should be a constant Regard to their spiritual Edification in Faith, in Holiness, and in Comfort. It is plain that so great a Variety of Services will demand considerable Furniture, in-order to perform them in a worthy and honourable Manner.

THE sanctifying Grace of God is to be mentioned in the first Place, as of the highest Importance. This is absolutely necessary to Ministers for the Salvation of their own Souls, and indeed for the avoiding a Condemnation aggravated in Proportion to the Eminency of their Station in the Church, the Profession they have made, and the Ordinances they have administered ; if this *Grace of God* be not *with* them, when they have ² *preached to others*, they will be *cast away* ; and though they have ³ *prophefied in Christ's name*, yet he will say unto them, *I never knew you, Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*. It is plainly declared in the Gospel, that ⁴ *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God* ; and they who preach this Doctrine, must at last stand or fall according to the Tenor of it.

VITAL Christianity in the Hearts of Ministers, will greatly conduce to their Usefulness in their Generation. When they have experienced a saving Change wrought in themselves by the Spirit of God, they will be better able to describe it and press it upon others. If they have only a Notion of Conversion, collected out of the Scriptures or the Writings of other good Men, they may insist upon it in their Sermons, but their Discourses will be dry, flat, and lifeless, and by no means agreeable to the Taste and Relish of enlightened Minds.

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 15. ² 1 Cor. ix. 27. ³ Matth. vii. 22, 23.

⁴ John iii. 3.

Minds. God does not ordinarily bless the Labours of these unexperienced Ministers, at least to such a Degree as he does the Services of those who are called by his Grace. ¹ “ Unregenerate
 “ Pastors are a threatening Danger, and a heavy
 “ Calamity on the Church of God ; they worship
 “ an unknown God, preach an unknown Sa-
 “ viour, an unknown Sanctifier, and are unac-
 “ quainted with that Holiness which they recom-
 “ mend to others ;” and therefore we cannot reasonably expect that they will be successful in their Work. *Paul* was converted before he was sent to preach the Gospel ; he was a Christian before he was an Apostle : And they who enter not into ² *the sheepfold* by the same Door, often prove *thieves and robbers*, and ³ *grievous wolves, not sparing the flock* ; nay sometimes they turn open Enemies and Persecutors of that Cause which they once espoused, and, like ⁴ *Judas*, falling by their *transgression*, they go to their own place.

ON these Accounts is the Grace of God necessary for Ministers, yet that alone will not fit them for their Work ; if it would, every Christian would be qualified for it, which renders the Office useless. In order therefore to make Men *able Ministers of the New Testament*,⁵ the Lord Jesus Christ pours out upon them a rich Effusion of his Spirit. We read that when *he ascended on high*, and ⁶ *led captivity captive, he gave gifts to men* ; and the Apostle expressly assures us, that one most eminent Purpose for which they were given, was that now under Consideration, *for the perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ*. The Apostles had extraordinary Powers, and could work

¹ *Gildas Salvianus*, p. 264. ² John x. 1, 8. ³ Acts xx. 29.

⁴ Acts i. 25. ⁵ 2 Cor. iii. 6. ⁶ Eph. iv. 8, 12.

work Miracles to awaken the Attention of a stupid World, and to confirm their Doctrine: And though these extraordinary Operations of the blessed Spirit are ceased, the *' pastors after God's own heart* shall not be left destitute of proper Furniture for a regular Discharge of the Duties incumbent upon them. The evangelical Service is a reasonable one, and should be performed in a rational Way. A Ministry without Gifts, qualifying for a Work in which the intellectual Powers ought to be imployed, is a lifeless Image, and will never answer the Intentions for which it was appointed.

Now these Favours proceed from the royal Bounty of an exalted Saviour, who dispenses them to whom, and in what Degree he pleases. It is by his *Grace* that Ministers *are* what they *are* in this Respect, and it is wholly owing to his Kindness, that they have a competent Measure of them. The Man who vainly and wickedly imagined that the apostolical Gifts could be *2 purchased with money*, intailed a Mark of Infamy upon his Name to succeeding Generations: And nothing but Pride and Arrogance will induce any to believe that they can merit those Indowments which the Redeemer now confers on the Overseers of his Flock. I may add, that the Freedom with which they are given is farther evident, because there are many Persons of good Sense, great Learning, and of a pious Disposition, who have earnestly coveted *3 the best gifts*, as being conscious of the want of them, which occasioned a Defect in their Acceptance and Usefulness; who yet could never attain to any Eminency in them, while a larger Share hath been communicated to some of a lower Capacity.

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NOT

¹ Jer. iii. 15.² Acts viii. 20.³ 1 Cor. xii. 31.

NOT that any are to neglect the proper Means for the obtaining these excellent Qualifications, and to expect them in a way of immediate Inspiration. The Prophet *Amos* thought there was something very extraordinary in his Case, that he who was ¹ *no prophet, nor prophet's son, but an herdsman of Tekoa, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit,* should be taken from following *the Flock*, and sent to *prophecy* to the People of *Israel*. The Spirit of God, in those Times, usually descended on such as were brought up in the Schools of the Prophets; and we may reasonably hope God will still bless the Fountains of a religious and learned Education, and that such Streams shall proceed from them, which will make glad the holy Place of the Tabernacle of the Most High. When Parents ² *lend their Children to the Lord*, and devote them to the Service of the Sanctuary, and ³ *God touches their Heart* in their tender Years, and they ⁴ *willingly offer themselves*, a comfortable Expectation may justly be indulged, that some Degree of Fitness for it shall be produced and improved by such Means as these. Accordingly we have found that the greatest Lights with which the Church of God has been blessed since the Days of the Apostles, were formed for Usefulness by such Cultivation; it ought not therefore to be slighted. It is a just Observation, that
 “ when Learning is despised, and a Pretence to
 “ immediate Teachings cried up in the room of
 “ it, powerful Godliness will soon depart from
 “ such a People, and all will dwindle into Ignorance, Conceit, and Vanity.”

2. DIVINE Grace will make us diligent in our Work.

It

¹ Amos vii. 14, 15.

² 1 Sam. i. 28.

³ 1 Sam. x. 26.

⁴ 2 Chron. xvii. 16.

It surely requires the greatest Diligence and the most constant Application; we should ¹ give ourselves *wholly* to it; we are ² *labourers* in the Lord's *harvest*; and we shall never answer that Character, if we do not imitate the industrious Husbandman, who exerts himself in reaping and gathering in the Fruits of the Earth. God ³ *hews* Men by his *Prophets*, and the rough Stones and knotty Pieces will never be fit for the spiritual *Building*, if the Workmen do not put forth their full Strength. The *slothful servant*, who, instead of stirring up the ⁴ *gift that is in him*, *bides his talent in a napkin, and buries it in the earth*, will find himself in a very bad Case, when his Lord shall call him to give up his Account; the most plausible Excuses will avail nothing, nor deliver him from the dreadful Effects of his just Resentment; peremptory Orders will then be issued forth to ⁵ *cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. This will be the heavy Doom of the Remiss and Negligent, who had only the Name and Title of Ministers, but disregarded the Duties of that holy Employment.

BUT divine Grace will produce a different Conduct, and excite us to do the Work which God hath put into our Hands, with all ⁶ *our might*. This vital and active Principle will bring us under a sort of ⁷ *necessity to preach the gospel*, and carefully to perform every other Part of that Service in which we are engaged; it will make us watchful of our Opportunities, and prevent our trifling away our precious Time in the little Impertinencies or vain Amusements of Life. If we are under its Influences, it will work us up to

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a fixed

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 15.² Matth. ix. 38.³ Hos. vi. 5.⁴ 2 Tim. i. 6.⁵ Matth. xxv. 30.⁶ Eccles. ix. 10.⁷ 1 Cor. ix. 16.

a fixed and steady Resolution to ¹ *labour more abundantly*, and to use our Indeavours in fulfilling that ² *ministry* which we have *received in the Lord*.

THE Grace of God will exalt our Views, and place his Honour on the Throne in our Heart, which will fill our Souls with the most ardent Zeal for his Glory; and that will be as a ³ *burning fire shut up in our bones*, almost ⁴ *eating us up*, and consuming us, until it break forth in vigorous Efforts to promote the Good of his Church. Divine Grace will beget in us such a tender Concern for the Flock which Christ has redeemed ⁵ *with his own blood*, that we shall chearfully ⁶ *spend and be spent* in their Service; our Time, our Strength, and all our Powers will be imployed for their Good. If we are ⁷ *affectionately desirous* of them, we shall be *willing* to impart to them *not the gospel of God only, but our own souls*, because they will be exceeding dear to us. Jacob served seven Years for Rachel, and the Fatigue was not heavy to him ⁸ *for the love he had to her*. And Charity, the greatest of all Graces, will make us labour *day and night*, ⁹ *in weariness and painfulness*, ¹⁰ *for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*.

MOREOVER, the Grace of God will raise our Thoughts above this World, and lead them ¹¹ *within the veil*, even into the *holiest of all*, to view that glorious Reward which faithful Ministers shall receive in a future State: And this will wind up all the Springs of Action, put all the Wheels in Motion, and produce the utmost Stretch

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

² Col. iv. 17.

³ Jer. xx. 9.

⁴ John ii. 17.

⁵ Acts xx. 28.

⁶ 2 Cor. xii. 15.

⁷ 1 Theff. ii. 7, 8.

⁸ Gen. xxix. 20.

⁹ 1 Cor. xi. 27.

¹⁰ 2 Tim. ii. 10.

¹¹ Heb. vi. 19.

Stretch of our Powers, lest we should miss of the ¹ prize which is set before us: When the ² *heavens are opened*, and we, by Faith, behold the *Son of Man standing with the crown in his Hand*, ready to place it on our Head, when we have filled up the Measure of our Services, that will animate and quicken us; and we shall *feed his flock with a* ³ *ready mind* and diligent Hand, when we are fully persuaded that we shall at last ⁴ *stand in a glorious Lot*, and *shine as the brightness of the firmament*, and as the stars for evermore.

3. THE Grace of God assists Ministers in the several Parts of their Work.

⁵ *WE have this treasure in earthen vessels*. Ministers are subject to like Passions, that is, animal Infirmities, as others; their Labours often weaken their Constitution, impair their Strength, and bring those Disorders upon them which unfit them for their Work, or frequently interrupt them therein. But their greatest Hindrance arises from the ⁶ *law in their members warring against the law in their minds*, and the *body of death* which they carry about with them: They have their dark Hours, and often ⁷ *groan, being burdened* with a very lifeless Frame of Spirit, even at those solemn Seasons when the best Temper is required: But the Redeemer has promised to be with them ⁸ *always, even to the end of the world*; and his ⁹ *Spirit and Grace will help their infirmities*, and ¹⁰ *inlarge their hearts*, that they may *run the way of his commandments*. When the ¹¹ *power of Christ rests upon them*, and his *strength is made perfect in their weakness*, their Souls will be set at Liberty,

¹ Philip. iii. 14.

² Acts vii. 56.

³ 1 Pet. v. 2.

⁴ Dan. xii. 3, 13.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 7.

⁶ Rom. vii. 23.

⁷ 2 Cor. v. 4.

⁸ Matth. xxviii. 20.

⁹ Rom. viii. 26.

¹⁰ Psal. cxix. 32.

¹¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

Liberty, and give a Readiness and some Degree of Sufficiency for every ¹ *good Word and work.*

² *They who labour in the word and doctrine,* should study to approve themselves to God by a due Preparation for publick Service, and look up to him for the Influences of his Grace to direct their Studies, that they might be pleasant to themselves, and profitable to others. They ought to pray that their Meditations may be so conducted, that they may answer the best Purposes. The *inspired Volume* is a large Work, and Ministers are sometimes at a loss what to pitch upon, their Thoughts are divided, they waste a great deal of precious Time in wandering from one Text to another; and this tedious Uncertainty would more frequently occur, if God did not interpose and determine the Choice. When this is done, and the Portion of Scripture to be considered fix'd, his Holy Spirit often descends, and gives such a Flow of useful and pertinent Thoughts, as shall be peculiarly adapted to the Circumstances of the Hearers; the Case of many shall be so particularly described, and the Advices proposed shall be so suitable, that the Discourse shall seem to be prepared immediately for their Benefit, when the Preacher was altogether unacquainted with them. It is a just Remark of a learned Writer,³ “ That there are few who have made any Observations on themselves, but have found that, in many Instances, they have been over-ruled, they know not by What, or How, or Why, to do Things which have been attended with very remarkable Consequences.” And thus it hath been with Ministers in their Retirements; such a Turn hath been given to their Minds, that they have

¹ Tit. iii. 1.

² 1 Tim. v. 17.

³ *Religion of*

have been unaccountably diverted from their first Intentions, and led to another Subject, or to the Management of that under Consideration, in a Manner quite different from what was at first designed ; and these happy Digressions have been signally owned and blessed in the Benefit which those who attended their Ministry have reaped from them. And may we not reasonably and piously conclude, that these still Whispers and silent Communications were from God himself, and that the *Hand* and *Voice* of the *Lord* was in them ? The chief ¹ *shepherd*, who ² *knows all things*, gives these secret Instructions to the *Masters of Assemblies*, that they may *feed* his *flock* and his *lambs* in such a manner, that, with Delight and Satisfaction, they may ³ *go in and out, and find pasture*.

GOD also cloaths his ⁴ *priests with righteousness and salvation*, when they resort to the ⁵ *place* where he hath recorded *his name*, that his *saints* may *shout for joy*. They appear there richly adorned with the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, which Habits are the peculiar Glory of their Profession. The ⁶ *house* of God is the *house of prayer*, and when Ministers are offering up the Petitions of the People, God pours out the ⁷ *spirit of grace and supplication*, that they may *wrestle* and plead with him. He touches their Lips with ⁸ *a coal* from his *altar*, and gives ⁹ *utterance* to them, that, in declaring his Counsels, they may *open their mouths boldly*, and ¹⁰ *speak as the oracles of God*. He teaches them to deliver themselves with that Gravity and Seriousness, with that Life and

¹ Eccles. xii. 11.

² John xxi. 17.

³ John x. 9.

⁴ Psal. cxxxii. 9.

⁵ Exod. xx. 24.

⁶ Matth. xxi. 13.

⁷ Zech. xii. 10.

⁸ Isa. vi. 6.

⁹ Eph. vi. 19.

¹⁰ 1 Pet. iv. 11.

and Power, which, through the divine Blessing, may most forcibly impress the Minds of the Hearers. The like Assistance is given in administering the Sacraments. The Grace of God makes them ¹ *servant in spirit*; and then they lead and guide the Devotions of their Fellow-worshippers with that Life which causes ² *their heart to burn within* them; and our Lord makes himself ³ *known to them* (as to the Disciples of old) in the *breaking of bread*.

I WOULD by no means countenance an Expectation of such visionary Impressions as cannot be supported either by Reason or Scripture. But is it not certain that the great Father of Spirits hath Access to our Minds in secret and invisible Ways? and cannot he move and incline them as he pleases, without infringing their Liberty, or doing Violence to their Faculties? Will it not contract his Empire, and narrow the Bounds of his Dominion, to place the Souls of Men in a State of Independency upon him? Is this consistent with his universal Government? or does not so much depend on the Intentions and Resolutions of free Agents, that all Things must soon fall into the utmost Confusion and Disorder, if these were not subject to the Direction of the great Ruler of the World? And is not the Work of the Ministry of such Consequence to Mankind, and so necessary to support the Interest of true Religion, that we may reasonably expect a kind Interposition in favour of those that are employed therein? Nay, has not his Word encouraged them to hope that he will ⁴ *stand* by them, and *strengthen* them by his Spirit, who shall ⁵ *ever abide with* his Church? Do not Ministers pray earnestly

¹ Rom. xii. 11.

² Luke xxiv. 32.

³ Luke xxiv. 35.

⁴ 1 Tim. iv. 17.

⁵ John xiv. 16.

earnestly for his Presence and Assistance? And do they mean nothing by those Prayers? Are they only decent Compliments paid to the Almighty, by which as little is intended as by such Forms of Civility amongst Men? And are they not, at some Times, in a much better Disposition than at others? and should they not acknowledge the kind Regards of their God on such happy Occasions?

4. DIVINE Grace supports Ministers under their Discouragements.

DIFFICULTIES will arise, if we faithfully discharge our Trust as ¹ *stewards of the mysteries of God*. We are attacking the ² *strong man armed*, and endeavouring to recover Souls out of his Hands; therefore we must expect that he will do his utmost to oppose and hinder us. The *Shepherds* of the Flock are the Objects of the Devil's most inveterate Malice, and, if it be possible, he will ³ *smite* them, that *the sheep may be scattered* and become his Prey. The Writers of the Lives of our first *Reformers*, and of many eminent *Ministers* who lived next after them, have given a particular Account of their Conflicts with this powerful Adversary; And if we of the present Age have milder Treatment, I am afraid it is because our Attempts against his Kingdom are feeble and less formidable to him than theirs.

AND as the Evil One hath an Influence over the ⁴ *children of disobedience*, so he will stir them up, to hinder the Progress of the Gospel, by pouring Contempt on those by whom it is published. None ever deserved better of Mankind than the Apostles, but few have met with worse Usage from an ungrateful and stupid World.

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These

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 2.

² Luke xi. 21.

³ Zech. xiii. 7.

⁴ Eph. ii. 2.

These excellent Men ¹ *went about doing good*, and yet those thoughtless Wretches, to whom they were ready to perform the kindest Offices, behaved towards them as if they had been the Scum of the Earth, the Refuse of the World, the ² *filth and off-scouring of all things*. And we have lived to see the Day, in a *Christian* and *Protestant* Nation, in which the Office of the Ministry is accounted a Burden to the Community, and the Persons who pay any Regards to it, are esteemed weak and superstitious.

BESIDES, Ministers must expect to meet with Exercises and Trials from those who are under their immediate Care; they have not ³ *already attained, or are already perfect*; the Minds of some of them are weak, their Capacities narrow, and their Passions strong; sometimes, perhaps, Pride and Vanity puffs them up, Anger and Resentment transports them beyond due Bounds, or Prejudice hurries them into Measures inconsistent with Christian Charity, and so that they are, in many Respects, a Contradiction to themselves. A Fondness for their own Opinions and Schemes, makes them dogmatical and impatient of the Instructions of those who are much wiser. The Views of this World often enter too far into their Conduct; and when these little secular Interests clash, they often forget their Relation to Christ and to each other; the ⁴ *beginning of their strife is as when one letteth out water*, and the Progress of their contention like the bars of a castle.

THESE Distempers of their Minds will certainly break forth on many Occasions, and give no small Uneasiness to those who are over them in them Lord; they will find it very difficult to please

¹ Acts x. 38.

² 1 Cor. iv. 13.

³ Phil. iii. 12.

⁴ Prov. xvii. 14.

please them either in their Preaching or in their Conduct : If they insist on the great Doctrines of Grace, they shall be censured as encouraging Licentiousness ; and when the Duties of the Christian Life are urged, Complaints will be made that they want Light in the Gospel : If they are free and chearful in Conversation, they are taxed with Levity ; and when they are grave and serious, they are accounted sour and morose. And what still renders their Lot harder, is, that what is commended and applauded at one time, shall be disapproved and even condemned at another : So fickle and so inconstant is Man !

THESE are no new Things, the Apostle *Paul* had a large Share of them ; he was unkindly used by those who had seen the ¹ *signs and wonders* he wrought, and were the ² *epistle of Christ* ministered by him, and *written with the Spirit of God*. The ³ *more* he loved them, the *less* was he beloved by them. They who had once such a Veneration for him, that they received him as an ⁴ *angel of God*, even as *Christ Jesus the Lord*, were so alienated from him, that they reckoned him their *enemy* only because he told them *the truth*. Such Weeds as these generally spring up in a time of Prosperity, and get to a head when the ⁵ *churches* have rest. Persecution often makes Christians humble and peaceable, but when they are delivered from Dangers from without, the ⁶ *enemy sows tares*, works up their Spirits to an undue Ferment, and makes them uneasy to themselves, uncomfortable to their Fellow-Christians, and troublesome to those who preside in the Societies to which they belong. We shall meet with something of this Kind wherever we go, since these are the Seeds of Sin

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which

¹ Rom. xv. 18, 19. ² 2 Cor. iii. 3. ³ 2 Cor. xii. 15.
⁴ Gal. iv. 14, 16. ⁵ Acts ix. 31. ⁶ Matth. xiii. 25.

which are sown in all Places. Should we attempt to deliver ourselves from them by changing our Situation, and removing from one Congregation to another, we might not only find ourselves disappointed, but should, perhaps, take up Burdens much heavier than those which we laid down.

BUT divine *Grace* will ¹ *comfort us in all our tribulations*; it will support us under these and all other Discouragements, and carry us honourably through them.

IT is not improbable that *Paul's thorn in the flesh*, ² was a Disorder in his Countenance, and an Hesitation in his Speech, occasioned by his Revelations, which made stronger Impressions upon him than his Constitution could bear. The Prophet *Daniel* was ³ *sick certain days, and fainted under his Visions*; and *John* ⁴ *fell as dead at the feet of Christ*, when he appeared to him; and *Paul's* Ascent into *the third heaven*, might possibly affect him after this manner. This Meanness in his Presence, and Defect in his Elocution, raised great Fears in his Mind, lest it should hinder the Success of his Ministry: He intended to preach the Gospel at *Rome* and *Athens*, amongst the Polite and Learned, who would despise him on this Account: And perhaps the *Athenians* might afterwards take occasion from thence to call him a ⁵ *Babbler*. However, it is certain that this *infirmity in his flesh* was a great Affliction, and *he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him*. To these Requests a gracious Answer was returned, though not in Kind, yet in a rich Equivalent, for what he desired; *Christ* assured him that ⁶ *his grace should be sufficient for him*; and then he could
glory

¹ 2 Cor. i. 4.

² 1 Cor. xii. 7.

³ Dan. viii. 27.

⁴ Rev. i. 17.

⁵ Acts xvii. 18.

⁶ 2 Cor. xii. 8—10.

* *Vid. Benson's History, Vol. II. p. 9.*

*glory in infirmities, because when he was weak in himself, he was strong in the Lord, and the power of his might.*¹

THE same Grace will be sufficient for us, when the Clouds gather, the Storms arise, and innumerable Evils surround us; ² *none of these things will move us, we shall be a defenced city, a brasen wall, an iron pillar, and a strong tower.*³ We shall fight the good fight of faith, and endeavour to finish our course,⁴ whatever Opposition we may meet with in our Way. If our Enemies insult us, our Friends slight us, and our own Infirmities lie heavy upon us, we shall ⁵ *indure hardness as good soldiers*, and be steadfast in that Work to which we are called. Divine Grace will inspire us with a firm and courageous Resolution of Mind, which shall gather Strength even from the Oppositions it meets with, and turn them into so many Occasions of approving our Fidelity to the great Captain of our Salvation, in a more illustrious manner than we could otherwise have done.

5. THE Influences of Divine Grace will produce in Ministers a wise and an honourable Conduct.

CHRISTIANITY is not formed on the Maxims of human Policy; and they who are employed in the Propagation of it, should carefully avoid those mean Artifices which fleshly Wisdom may dictate, and always manage it with *Simplicity and godly Sincerity*. And yet the Ambassadors of Christ should take care to behave in a discreet manner; otherwise they will not be able to maintain the Dignity of their own Character, or to support the Honour of him that sent them. If the Grace of God is plentifully communicated to them,

¹ Eph. vi. 10.
⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

² Acts xx. 24.
⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 3.

³ Jer. i. 18.

them, it will make them such *wise master-builders*, laying the foundation ¹ on the apostles and prophets, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*,² and building thereupon gold and silver, and not wood, hay, and stubble, which shall be burnt up³ and consumed. If they are under the Influences of this Grace in preaching the everlasting gospel, they will proceed with Caution, and not indulge the Sallies of a warm Imagination, in delivering that which in their cooler Hours they will not be able to defend; they will *speak the words of truth and soberness*, and endeavour to set the great Doctrines of Religion, contained in the holy Scriptures, in the justest and most unexceptionable Light, that the Weak and less Judicious may not fall into Mistakes, nor any Occasion of Censure be given to the Severe and Captious. They will also imitate the Example of *Jesus*, who instructed his Disciples *as they were able to bear it*,⁴ and did not unseasonably insist on those things which they could not receive, but on the whole taught in such a manner, that many admired the Wisdom which was given unto him. And if his Spirit rest upon us, we shall *teach every man in all wisdom*, choosing the most proper Seasons, and accommodating ourselves to Mens different Circumstances and Capacities, that we may *present them perfect in Christ Jesus*.⁵ The *wise Servant*, who is conducted by the same Spirit of Wisdom, will do all things decently, and keep up the Decorum of holy Administrations, that nothing mean and ridiculous may appear in them, while the Simplicity of the Gospel is preserved. He will give to his Lord's Household *their meat in due season*,⁶ and by a punctual and exact observing the Time allotted for publick

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 10.² Eph. ii. 20.³ 1 Cor. iii. 12.⁴ Mark iv. 33.⁵ Col. i. 28.⁶ Matth. xxiv. 43.

publick Worship, and a discreet Adjustment of every Part of the Service, allowing each its proper Share, will increase the Satisfaction and Delight with which God's Saints *worship him in the beauty of holiness.*¹

MOREOVER, Divine Grace will inspire us with *that wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits.*² This will make us wary and cautious in our Undertakings, prudently attending to the Consequences of our Actions, that foreseeing the Inconveniences which will follow, we may avoid them. This excellent Indowment will drive away that *Anger and Resentment which rests only in the bosoms of fools;*³ it will incline us to forgive Injuries, to pass by little Affronts, and so wisely to accommodate ourselves to the Temper of our People, as to render them easy to themselves, and serviceable to the common Interest.

THE Grace of God will enable the Ministers of the Gospel to *walk in wisdom towards them that are without, giving no offence*⁴ *in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed,*⁵ *but pleasing all men in all things, not seeking our own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved:*⁶ It will make us affable and courteous to all Men, and we shall not say to them, *Stand by, we are holier than you;* but the Ease and Freedom of Conversation will be maintained without such a Compliance as will confirm any in their Folly, and harden them in their Iniquity. It will also dispose us to do the kindest Offices, and to watch for Opportunities to oblige and serve them.

THUS,

¹ Psal. cx. 3.

² Jam. i. 27.

³ Eccles. vii. 9.

⁴ Col. iv. 5.

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 13.

⁶ 1 Cor. x. 32, 33.

⁷ Isa. lxy. 5.

THUS, on the whole, this Grace will make us the ¹ *lights of the world, and salt of the earth*: In our Families, and in all the Relations of Civil Life, it will teach us to shew ourselves Patterns of good Works, that we may be ² *examples to the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in purity, and in every Christian Virtue*. In a word, to ³ *behave ourselves holily, justly, and unblameably among them*.

6. THE Grace of God gives Efficacy to the Labours of Ministers.

WE cannot but wish for Success in every good Undertaking, but surely it is especially desirable in the great Work of the Ministry; in which the Honour of God, the Interest of a Redeemer, and the Salvation of immortal Souls are so apparently and so intimately concerned. It is certain that some Ministers have been remarkably succeeded as the means of converting a Multitude of *sinners from the error of their way*,⁴ of turning many from Sin to Righteousness, and edifying Christians in their most holy Faith; and they have had the Satisfaction to know that they have been thus useful. Much Good may have been done by others, tho' they themselves may be in a great measure ignorant of it. And indeed I verily believe none will know all the Success that has attended their Labours, till they receive the Reward of them. Many may appear at the last as their *crown of rejoicing*,⁵ who either never had an Opportunity to acquaint them with the Benefit which they received from their Ministrations, or through Modesty concealed it from them.

BUT whatever Success has attended them, it was not owing to their *own power and holiness*,⁶ but to

¹ Matth. v. 13.

² 1 Tim. iv. 12.

³ 1 Theff. ii. 10.

⁴ Jam. v. ult.

⁵ 2 Theff. ii. 19, 20.

⁶ Acts iii. 12.

to the hand of the Lord that was with him, which, where numerous Converts were made, inclined them to believe and turn to him.¹ The weapons of our warfare are mighty only through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ.² We shall never persuade any to become the Redeemer's willing people, until the day of his power³ pass upon them. The fishers of men⁴ may toil, but they will catch nothing unless Jesus directs the casting of the Net. Our Expectations will often be disappointed, and we shall reap nothing when we promised ourselves a plentiful Harvest. The Sermons which we may think most adapted to do good, will not answer the End, nor be attended with Success; but we shall stretch forth our hand all the day long unto a disobedient and gainsaying people,⁵ who will continue to walk in ways that are not good,⁶ and to follow their own Thoughts, though we do our utmost to persuade them to put away the evil of their doings.⁷ This hath been, and always will be the Case, if God does not work with us and by us. The Apostle has set this Matter in a clear and strong Light in the beginning of this Epistle to the Corinthians, which you may consult at large; and when he had reproved them with some Severity for their eager Contentions about human Names, he expressly declares, that if any good had been done by the most eminent Ministers, it was to be ascribed to God alone; and he declares it in the most emphatical Terms:

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Neither

¹ Acts xi. 21.² 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.³ Psal. cx. 3.⁴ Mark i. 17.⁵ Rom. x. 21.⁶ Isa. lxxv. 2.⁷ Isa. i. 16.

*Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.*¹ He could not speak more diminutively of himself and his Brethren, or place them lower, than by pronouncing that they were as nothing in that wonderful Success which attended their Labours. With all their divine Indowments, they could not add Efficacy to their own Ministrations: They could raise the Dead, heal the Sick, dispossess Satan of the Bodies of Men, but they could not raise up Souls *dead in trespasses and sins*,² heal the Sickness of the Mind, nor deliver those who were ³ *taken captive by the Evil One*, without the silent and powerful Communications of divine Grace. And if these inspired Preachers could not make their Labours successful, What can we do with our meaner Talents? Should we not always say, when we are of any use, that it is not we, *but the grace of God which was with us?*

II. I NOW proceed to the Reflections which will naturally arise from this Subject.

I. IF the Grace of God will thus abundantly furnish Ministers for their Work, we may certainly conclude that it will be sufficient for Christians in a more private Capacity.

GOD hath something for all his Servants to do and to suffer while they are here in this World; and he expects they should faithfully *serve their generation according to his will*,⁴ and, *by a patient continuing in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality*.⁵ The Way to Heaven is not so smooth and easy as many imagine; and we shall certainly

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 7.

² Eph. ii. 1.

³ 2 Tim. ii. ult.

⁴ Acts xiii. 36.

⁵ Rom. ii. 7.

certainly meet with Difficulties in it; for *thro' much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.*¹

BUT Ministers have many additional Services, and stand exposed to greater Trials on account of their public Character in the Church of Christ. Now if divine *Grace* is *sufficient* for them, it will be much more so for those from whom less Work is required, and upon whom much lighter Burdens are laid. The humble Christian may surely make such Reflections as these on what the Grace of God does for Ministers: "I have often beheld, " with Surprise and Wonder, its mighty Efficacy " in their high Attainments, in their excellent " and useful Labours, in their uncommon Exer- " cises, in their honourable Conduct, and in " their most extensive Usefulness; therefore I " may, with Safety, depend upon it, since it " cannot fail me in the narrower Sphere in which " I move. If the Captains of the Lord's Hosts " have been animated by this Grace successfully " to fight his Battles, I doubt not but I shall be " able to maintain the little Post he hath assigned " me with Honour, and that the same Grace will " enable me to hold out and indure to the End."

2. FROM hence we infer, That Ministers should be recommended to the Grace of God.

THIS ought to be done with much Solemnity when they first enter upon their Work. The Reason and Fitness of Things require that they should not ingage in that important Undertaking, without fervent Addresses to the Throne of Grace, that they may be carried thro' it with Honour

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to

¹ Acts xiv. 22.

² 2 Cor. xii. 9.

to their great Master, with Usefulness to those amongst whom they labour, and Comfort to themselves. Since, as we have seen, nothing can be done to any good Purpose without the Influences of divine Grace, these ought to be sought with the greatest Importunity.

WHEN *Saul* and *Barnabas* had received their Commission to preach the Gospel to the idolatrous *Gentiles*, express Orders were given by the Holy Ghost to *separate them for the work whereunto they were called*; and *when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, they sent them away.*¹ And when *Paul* set out on a second Journey, he was again recommended, by the Brethren, *to the grace of God.*² This laudable and reasonable Custom is still kept up in our Churches, and, I hope, never will be laid aside. When Ministers devote themselves to this holy Employment, or are removed by Providence from one Congregation to another, divine Influences should be earnestly sought, that Ministers and People may be more deeply impressed with a Sense of their Dependence upon them.

THE People should be daily recommending their Ministers to this *Grace*, in their secret and private Addresses unto God. The Apostles made it their Request to the *brethren* to ³ *pray for them*; and since we stand in greater need of such Prayers, it will be very unkind if you will not allow us a share in yours, especially when you consider that your own Interest is concerned, and that in praying for us, you do, in effect, pray for yourselves. If God stand at a distance from us, not only we, but our People also, will soon feel the Loss of his Presence; and when the Spirit is plentifully

¹ Acts xiii. 2, 3.

² Acts xv. 40.

³ 1 Thess. v. 25.

plentifully poured out upon us, they will soon reap the Benefit of it.

3. LET Ministers and People readily and thankfully own their many and great Obligations to the *Grace* of God.

THE Benefits which are conferred upon us as Christians, demand our thankful Acknowledgements; but we ought, in a particular manner, to *thank our Lord Jesus Christ*, and to magnify his Grace for those superadded Favours by which we are fitted for, and ¹ *put into the ministry*. It is a great Privilege to be admitted into the Family of God, but it is a distinguishing Mark of Honour to be appointed the *Stewards* of his Household, to preside amongst his Servants. The Number of Ministers is but small, if compared with the rest of Christ's Disciples; and many who assume that Character, too evidently appear to be destitute of this Grace, and very little acquainted with its Influences. How many *Teachers* are there in *Israel* that *know not these things*,² and are rash enough to censure the most sober Discourses of them as enthusiastical? This should farther engage the happy Subjects of this Grace to render to the Lord according to his peculiar Regards unto them. *Paul* considered the Apostleship as a Favour, and wondered that he who was *less than the least of all saints*,³ and who had *been the chief of sinners*,⁴ should be called to it. We should follow his Example, and, in our lower Station, humbly own that we were altogether unworthy of the Honour conferred upon us: If any good hath been by us, we should claim nothing to ourselves, but give the Glory of all our Services,

and

¹ 1 Tim. i. 12.

² John iii. 10.

³ Eph. iii. 8.

⁴ 1 Tim. i. 15.

and of all our Successes, to that Grace which worketh with us and by us.* Let the most useful of Christ's Ministers always remember, that *except the Lord had built the house, they had laboured in vain*;¹ and therefore they should say, *Not unto us, but unto thy name*,² let the glory be given.

THEY who reap Benefit from our Ministry, should also entertain the same Sentiments, and join with us in paying that Tribute which is so justly due unto the Grace of God. When God blesteth our Labours, and we are not only their *Instructors*, but their ³*fathers in Christ*, they are apt to indulge an undue Attachment to us, especially under their first religious Impressions, and to give that Honour to the Servant which belongs only to the Master. But let them consider, that it was not from any Virtue in us, that their Souls received Healing, but that it was the great Physician who recovered them: Let them learn of the primitive Christians, who, when they heard of *Paul's* Conversion, his Entrance on the Ministry, and Success in it, ⁴*glorified God in him*: They did not glorify him; they considered him only as an Instrument, and gave the Honour unto the Lord, who made use of him to serve the Purposes of his own Glory. Where an undue Regard is paid to the Creature, and a confident Dependence fixed upon it, in a Forgetfulness of divine Grace, it will be just in God to permit the Soul to suffer Hunger where it expected constant Food, and to languish under Ordinances administered by the most able Hand, from which the greatest Refreshment has often been found. 4. HENCE

* *Bias*, a Heathen Philosopher, could say, *Ὁν αὖ ἀγαθὸν ποιεῖς, εἰς Θεὸν ἀνατίθης*, If thou dost any Good, ascribe it to God. *Diog. Laer. Vit. Bias.*

¹ Psal. cxxvii. 1. ² Psal. cxv. 1. ³ 1 Cor. iv. 15.
⁴ Gal. i. 24.

4. HENCE we may learn that Ministers, and those that attend their Ministrations, should maintain a constant Dependence upon the *Grace* of God.

IT is good Advice that is given to *Timothy* an Evangelist, that he should *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*; ¹ which implies a Caution that he should not trust to his own Strength to do the Work put into his Hands: And surely we should attend to it, since it is at least as necessary for us as it was for him. Some think our Saviour had a particular Respect to the great and difficult Services to which the Apostles were called, when he told them, that he ² *was the vine, they were the branches*; and that *as the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine, no more could they, except they did abide in him; for without him they could do nothing*. Doubtless the Words may be applied to them in their distinguishing Character, as well as under the more common Appellation of Christians. And if we consider them in that View, they direct Ministers to a Dependence upon the Grace of Christ to help them in the Performance of those Duties which are incumbent upon them in that public Capacity.

NOT that this should lead us into a Neglect of suitable Preparation for our Work; we must study closely, pray fervently and constantly, if we would be *workmen, who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*. ³ But when we have done our best, we should look higher, and turn our Eyes and Thoughts to Jesus, who only can bless our Endeavours: We should lay all our

Composures

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 1.

² John xv. 4, 5.

³ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

Composures at his Feet, begging that he would assist us in the Delivery of them, and crown them with Success. This is an Honour due to divine Grace, and shews that we have such an high Opinion of its Efficacy and Power, as to place our intire Confidence in it. Some Ministers, who have strictly observed themselves, have found, and have recorded it as their frequent Experience, that the Pleasure and Success of their ministerial Labours, have been proportionable to the Degree in which they have maintained a Dependence on divine Influences. When they have entered upon their Work, in their Studies or their Pulpits, with a full Conviction of their own Weakness, they have found most Inlargement within; and, on the other hand, when they have been puffed up with their own Sufficiency, they have sunk much beneath themselves, have been given up perhaps to an observable Barrenness of Thoughts and Language, or, in their most elaborate Performances, they have laboured in vain. Whenever we expect much from ourselves, and do, as it were, set aside the Grace of God, we may deservedly be corrected for our Folly by being deprived of its Influences.

5. IF the Grace of God influences Ministers to so many good Purposes, we should then pray that a considerable Measure of it might be bestowed upon those who are designed for, or entering upon that Work.

THE Methods of Education are much improved, and there are such Advantages now amongst us for Proficiency in human Literature, as many of us were not favoured with in our
younger

younger Years. Wise and learned Tutors are a public Blessing ; may their Number be increased ; and may the Lives of those who are well qualified for that Service, be prolonged to a good old Age ! But, with all their Skill and Application, they cannot, of themselves, make useful Ministers : Some will miscarry under their Care, and others will come forth in a Way little adapted to do good unto Souls, if God doth not pour out his Spirit, and bestow the Gift of his Grace upon them. For this Reason we should be importunate with God for a large Communication of this Grace to the rising Generation of Ministers, that a divine *unction from the Holy One* might teach them,¹ and then they will be able to teach others in a useful and acceptable Manner ; *for none teacheth like God.*² *Our fathers, where are they ? The prophets, do they live for ever ?*³ Several valuable Ministers have been removed in the Compass of a few Years, and others are in the Decline of Life, their Sun is going down, their Evening-Shadows lengthen, and, in a little time, the Vail of Night will be drawn over them, and *the eye that seeth them, shall see them no more.*⁴ Then the great Concernments of the Redeemer's Kingdom will devolve on those who are now the rising Generation : May the great Lord of the Harvest send them forth as able and faithful labourers into his harvest,⁵ to supply the Places of those who are going, or are already gone, to a better World. As we *decrease*, may they *increase*, not only in Number, but in a divine Sufficiency for their Work, and *in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*⁶ *May a double portion of that spirit,*⁷ which

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¹ 1 John ii. 20.² Job xxxvi. 22.³ Zech. i. 5.⁴ Job vii. 8.⁵ Matth. ix. ult.⁶ Rom. xv. 29.⁷ 2 Kings ii. 9.

has rested on the most eminent in the present Age, be upon those that succeed, that they may do God more and better Service in their Day, than we have done in ours! May vital Christianity live when we are dead; and may *pure Religion, and undefiled*, be propagated amongst our Children, and our Childrens Children, when we are sleeping in the Dust! May that flourish from Age to Age, and from Generation to Generation, *as long as Sun and Moon shall endure!* To these Wishes, and to these Prayers, let all the People say, *Amen.*

6. IF Ministers are under so many Obligations to the Grace of God, they should be ready, on all Occasions, to plead its Cause, and to recommend it to others.

It is a just Remark of one who was well acquainted with this Grace while on Earth, and I doubt not but he is now giving Glory to it in Heaven, ¹ “That the Name of Grace is become contemptible with many, treated with Ridicule, as a Term of Cant, fit only for Enthusiasts, or, at the best, for dull and old-fashioned Divines.” These are the modish Sentiments, and it is accounted an Evidence of a fine Genius, and of a polite Taste, eagerly to give into them. This unhappy Degeneracy calls upon Ministers to defend the Honour of divine Grace, and to endeavour, by all Christian and Gospel Methods, to secure and rescue it from Contempt.

THEY should attempt this out of a Regard for the Interests of real Religion in the World. I apprehend that a considerable Difference may
generally

¹ *Bennet's Christian Oratory, Vol. I. pag. 298.*

generally be discerned, as to the Power of Godliness, between the Congregations where this Grace is wisely and soberly preached, and those in which it is exploded, and the shattered and broken Powers of human Nature are exalted and placed in its stead. How can we expect God should bless us, when that is neglected on which the Efficacy of all our Labours does depend? Strong and masterly Reasoning may engage the Attention, and enlighten the Understanding of some; accurate and polite Discourses may amuse the Fancies of others; but it is the Grace of God that must reach the Heart, and make the Word effectual to Salvation. Why then should we be shy of mentioning it, and unwilling to insist upon it in our Sermons, especially if our Principles will allow a suitable Regard to it? Let us not pass it over as a nice and useless Speculation, but let us rather imitate the Example of the Apostle *Paul*, who frequently makes a most honourable and affectionate mention of it. *Freely we have received,*¹ and let us give it out with a liberal Hand, and in large Portions, for the Nourishment of the Souls of the Faithful, that we may appear to be indeed *good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*²

THIS Grace is also a proper Subject for Conversation. When we are visiting our People, we have a fair Opportunity of saying many Things in its Favour, to engage them to join with us in due Acknowledgments to it, and Dependence upon it. We may, so far as Humility and Prudence will allow, entertain them with a History of it in ourselves, or relate the great Things which it hath done for others. Dis-

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¹ Matth. x. 8.² 1 Pet. iv. 10.

course on such Subjects would turn to a much better account than angry Disputes, than wounding the Reputation of the Absent, and oftentimes of the Innocent, or than wasting our precious Hours in those gayer Trifles, which may, perhaps, leave both us and others less disposed for the Duties of Life than we before were. Besides, it is our Interest to support the Honour of this Grace, we should do it for our own sakes. How unhappy is it, when we discover an Indifferency toward that by which *we are what we are*? While a Minister is slighting the Grace of God, he is doing a great Injury to himself, he is weakning his own Strength, sinking his own Comfort, and obstructing the Success of his own Labours. On the other hand, when we are making *manifest the* ¹ *savour* of this Grace *in every place*, we shall find it will turn to a good account in a rich *supply of the Spirit*,² that will work powerfully in us; and we shall feel its Influences on our Heart, which will assist and strengthen us in our Work.

THIS appeared very remarkably in my dear and worthy Brother, your late Reverend Pastor, whose Death we are now lamenting, and who, as I hinted before, desired me to insist on this Subject, that he might leave with you his dying Testimony to the Riches and Freedom of that Grace by which he was what he was.

IN his younger Years he was much addicted to those Amusements and Diversions in which too many, in the present Age, lavish away their precious Time, while their best and most valuable Interests are neglected. But it pleased God, who designed him for eminent Service, to *call him by his grace*, and to *reveal his Son*³ in him, which effectually

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 14.

² Phil. i. 19.

³ Gal. i. 16.

effectually reclaimed him from the Follies of Youth, and led him afterwards frequently to drop a Tear over them, praying they might *be remembred no more.* As soon as he had received the Grace of God, it was his great Concern to watch against every thing which might obstruct his Progress in Religion, and to use all proper Means to promote and strengthen the Christian Temper in all its Branches. In order hereunto, he narrowly inspected the Workings of his own Mind, and strictly observed the manner of his Conversation. A few Days before his Death, he put into my Hands several little Volumes, under Obligations never to expose them to the View of any Person living; which, I hope, I shall not violate by a few Observations upon them. These Papers contain a Journal of his Life from the time of his Conversion, until he was so disabled by Weakness, that he could carry the Account no farther. He seldom missed a Day, for several Years, unless interrupted by Sicknes, or some extraordinary Occurrence, without entring some useful and profitable Remarks. In these Memoirs we have an Account of the deep Impressions made upon his Mind by the gracious Regards of God in seeking him out when he was as a lost Sheep, and in bringing him under the special Care of the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls. Here we find him admiring the free Grace of God in forming Christ in his Heart, and in carrying on that good Work which he had begun. From these Notes I learn he was very severe in examining into the Disorders of his Mind, and the Defects of his Conversation, and very desirous that they might be rectified: For which Purpose

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he frequently set apart Time to ~~seek~~ the Lord in secret, to ingage his Assistance in mortifying Sin, and to obtain those Communications of Grace and Strength, which would enable him to be *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*¹ From hence also I collect, that he was *working out his own salvation with fear and trembling,*² and that he had other Affairs on his Hands, in his Retirements, besides the framing of Discourses for the Entertainment of his People in Publick. It also appears that he was particularly exact in the Review of his religious Hours, and in reflecting on the Frame of his Spirit in the solemn Acts of Worship; that he might give Glory to God when it was comfortable, and be suitably affected when it was otherwise. In a word, from an intimate Acquaintance with him, I had a great deal of reason to conclude that he was a very good Christian; but I must own, I never saw so much of his great Attainments in Religion, as appears by the amiable Pourtraiture of his Inward Man in several Parts of this Diary.

It was a strong Desire to do good to the Souls of Men, by *teaching transgressors the ways of God, that sinners might be converted to him,*³ which inclined him to devote himself to the Work of the Ministry. He found so much real Satisfaction in Religion, that he was willing others might taste its Pleasures; and he saw so much Danger in a Course of Sin, that he thought he could not do a kinder Office, than to warn Men of it, that they might escape the Pollution and Condemnation to which it would expose them. He was not so early in his Preparation for this holy Imployment as some others, but, with the
Blessing

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 1.² Phil. ii. 12.³ Psa. li. 13.

Blessing of God on his great Industry and indefatigable Endeavours, he soon came forth qualified with those Indowments which are of the greatest Importance to render Ministers useful to the Church of Christ.

HE had a great Gift in Prayer, and could express himself very copiously and pertinently in that sacred Exercise, especially on particular Occasions. His Preaching was plain, scriptural, and experimental, in the good *old puritanical Strain*. He did not affect the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, which please the Fancy; neither was he nicely curious in the Form of his Discourses; but it was his Endeavour to touch the Conscience and impress the Heart. He insisted largely on the peculiar Doctrines of the Gospel, especially on the Atonement of Christ, and the sanctifying Influences of the Spirit. He looked upon these as the two Pillars in the New Testament Temple, without which the Building would soon fall to the Ground. These were his favourite Subjects, his delightful Topics, which triumphed in his Sermons, and diffused themselves through all his Performances. He never failed to introduce them whenever the Argument in hand lead to them; and sometimes, like holy *Paul*, with whose Writings he was so much delighted and edified, he did not scruple a Digression which might exalt the Name and Grace of a Redeemer, and endear him to himself and to his Hearers. He was fully persuaded that these were the essential Parts of the Gospel Scheme, that they were clearly revealed in the holy Scripture, and that they could not be dropt without giving up Christianity. And what he had felt of the Importance of them to himself, was one great Reason
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of his inviolable Attachment to them. In his last Sickness he declared to several of his particular Friends, that he had considered some modern Sentiments, in the Views of an approaching Dissolution, and that awful Account which he was soon to give of himself unto *God the judge of all*,¹ but durst not venture his Soul upon what was advanced by them; and that nothing could afford him any Relief, in the Circumstances he was then in, but the Righteousness of Christ to give him a Title to Heaven, and the Grace and Spirit of the Redeemer to make him *meet for the inheritance with the saints in light*. Here he fixed as on a sure Foundation, which he knew could never deceive him. These Doctrines he preached as *doctrines according to godliness*, and improved them to promote Purity of Heart, and Holiness of Life, in the Disciples of *Jesus*. He governed himself very much by this Maxim, Always to preach the Grace of the Gospel practically, and the Duties of it evangelically: And I heartily wish that such a Maxim may be as prevalent as it is reasonable, and would be useful to Ministers and People.

He was diligent in his Work, and *in labours more abundant*.² Besides the Care of his own Congregation, which was very large, he frequently visited his Friends abroad, preached several Lectures, and was ready to lay hold on every Opportunity to do good; and God wonderfully owned and blessed his Labours. There were many *added to the church*³ under his immediate Care, and a promising Harvest appeared to be springing up there, even when God laid him aside, and called him to receive his Reward: May

¹ Heb. 12. 23.² 2 Cor. xi. 23.³ Acts ii. 47.

May it grow up to Maturity, to the Joy of such as may enter on his Labours! But his Usefulness was not confined to his own People; there are several in other Places, both in the great City and in the Country, who have reason to bless God for the Benefit which they received by his Ministry. His Race was short, but it was well run. He had not quite twenty Years allowed for publick Service in the Church of Christ,¹ but there are few, in these later Ages, have done more in so short a space of Time. And here it will be worth while to observe how constantly he gave the Glory of all to God, of which his Diary furnishes me with perpetual Instances. When he heard of any Good done by his Ministry, he often makes such pious Reflections as these upon it: “ Lord, I am amazed to think of thy free Grace! “ O Grace, Grace, the very Quintessence of Grace! “ that God should afford his Spirit and Presence, “ and give Success to the Labours of one so unworthy as myself!”

He was a Person of great Moderation, and behaved with much Decency and Candor towards those who differed from him. He claimed a Liberty of judging for himself in Matters of Religion, and he as readily granted the same to others; which did not proceed from a Coldness and Indifference towards that which appeared to him to be *the faith once delivered to the saints*,² but from an earnest Desire to secure and propagate it. It was his fixed and settled Judgment, that the Mind of Man could not be forced; that Things must be received in the Light in which they appear to the Understanding; that Heat and Passion eclipse

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¹ He died July 31, 1736. in the 42d Year of his Age.

² Jude, ver. 3.

the Glory of Gospel Truths ; and that severe Censures, given out by fallible and uninspired Men, would prejudice Persons against them. He was fully persuaded that the Faith of Christians could not *stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God* ; and that all the Methods, which carried in them more of human Authority than of scriptural Argument, would, in the Event, be ineffectual for its Preservation, and prejudicial to its Interests. He often took notice how unsuccessful and mischievous they had been in several Instances in former Times ; and he feared they would be much more so in the present Age, in which Men are grown so very tenacious of their Liberty, that the least Appearance of Imposition inflames their Passions, and may lead them, perhaps, to carry both their Resentments and their Suspicions to an extravagant Height. He often lamented the Disservice which is done to the Cause of Truth, by the intemperate Zeal of some, who, he apprehended, designed very well, and wished that cooler Measures had been taken in all the unhappy Disputes which have arisen amongst Christians. Thus he did not only commend Charity, but exercised it ; and that excellent Grace appeared in his whole Conduct. These mild and gentle Attempts to establish his People in the Truth, were attended with remarkable Success ; while other Churches have been intangled with passionate Debates, which have ended in Quarrels and Divisions, this, in which he presided, *held the truth in love, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied and edified.*² And I will venture to affirm, that those Doctrines which are

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 5.

² Acts ix. 31.

are allowed to be orthodox by the most zealous, judicious, and experienced Christians of our own Day, and were generally maintained by our first Reformers, are as firmly believed, and as cordially imbraced amongst you, my Brethren, of this Society, and in other Places round about, where he had the most peculiar Friendship and Influence, as in any Part of this Kingdom. He preached the plain Truths of the Gospel Revelation; and as God was pleased to add Efficacy to them, and to deliver the Hearts of many into *that form of doctrine* which is contained therein, this effectually secured them from dangerous Heresies: And he was inclined to think, that if the same Methods had been taken in other Places, novel Opinions had gained as little ground elsewhere, as they have done in these Parts.

HE knew the World, and had studied Men as well as Things: He entered far into the Intentions and Inclinations of those with whom he conversed, and, by a singular Dexterity, often turned them to the best Purposes. He had a great Command of his Temper, and could yield without a mean or servile Compliance with what was dishonourable; or steadily maintain his ground, without the least Appearance of Arrogance and Severity, as he saw Occasion, either for the one or the other. This Acquaintance with human Nature, was very serviceable to him in his public Labours. His Reasoning was frequently built upon Facts, and his Instructions and Exhortations were founded on Things known and understood by all, which therefore carried their own Evidences to the Hearers.

HE was obliging in his Behaviour towards all Men, and cultivated a friendly Correspondence

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¹ Rom. vi. 17.

with those of the established Church. The Foundation of this laudable Practice was laid here, many Years since, by one of his Predecessors, that great Man of God the Rev^d Mr. JOHN MAIDWELL, and it was much improved by Mr. SAUNDERS. I cannot here omit mentioning the candid Return it met with from many of the principal Inhabitants of this Town; their respectful Behaviour towards him in his Health, their kind Offices in his Sickness, and their real Sorrow at his Death, will not soon be forgotten.

As a Friend he was generous and kind, watchful of all Opportunities to serve those to whom he stood engaged under that Character. He carried about with him a constant and affectionate Concern for them, which shewed itself in a Readiness, on all Occasions, to maintain their Character, and promote their Usefulness; and when they needed his Assistance, he would enter thoroughly into their Case, and, without Solicitation or Importunity, seek and promote their real Advantage. His great Acquaintance and Influence furnished him with many Opportunities of this kind; and as it was one of the greatest Pleasures of his Life to observe and improve them, so it was very remarkable, that when any of his Friends have been extricated out of Difficulties, or reaped Benefits by his Means, he would never boast of the Service he had done them, but modestly decline the Praise, by ascribing it to others rather than to himself.

To his own People he was a tender and affectionate Shepherd, sympathizing with them in their Trials, counselling them in their Difficulties, relieving and supporting them in their Straits, and praying earnestly for them in all their Troubles.

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So cordially was he united in Affection to them, that no Solicitations could prevail upon him to remove from them, tho' considerable Offers were made him from abroad, and great Importunity used to prevail on him to accept them. This endeared him very much to his Flock, and did not a little contribute to the Success of his Labours among them.

HE met with many uncommon Afflictions, under which he generally appeared easy and chearful. He did not burden his Friends with long and tedious Complaints, but poured them out before that God who is able to *help in every time of need*;¹ and he was supported and carried comfortably through several of them. They certainly gave him Uneasiness, and might impair his Health, but they contributed very much to the Improvement of his better part; he came forth out of the Furnace as *Gold tried in the Fire*; and some of the best Sermons he ever preached, were those which succeeded his severest Exercises. These led his Thoughts very far into the Mysteries of Providence, and enabled him to set many of its darkest Scenes in a fair Light, that he might *comfort those which were in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith he had been comforted of God*.²

THE Removal of such an accomplished Person, in the midst of his Days, who was so well qualified for publick Service, has made a very great Breach upon us, which God alone is able to repair. He had surmounted great Difficulties, and was ripened by Experience and Observation; and we were promising ourselves much Satisfaction and Benefit from his remaining Years, which, according to the ordinary Course of Nature,

¹ Heb. iv. 16.

² 2 Cor. i. 4.

Nature, might have been many, and their Usefulness long increasing; but the great Sovereign of our Lives and Mercies has seen fit to remove him to Scenes of far more important and delightful Service above. We dare not repine at the Stroke, but surely we are allowed, we are required to feel and to lament it. You of this Church have sustained a Loss, which, I fear, will not soon be made up; and the Loss is not yours alone, but we, his Brethren in the Ministry, are *this day weak* by the Fall of a great man in our *Israel*.¹ How are we *distressed for our brother?* useful and *pleasant has he been to us in life!*² But he is gone: His Prayers, his Counsels, and his Assistance we shall have no more, how much soever we may desire and want them. Nevertheless, I hope the Prayers he did so often and fervently offer up for the Interests of Religion amongst us, are yet on Record before God, and that Mercy will still be returned in answer to them.

LET his Example live in our Memory, and let us *be followers of him* in those many Respects in which he was a faithful Follower of *Christ, the great apostle and high priest of our profession*.³ And let us look up to God for his Grace to enable us to act the same wise and good Part in our Day, that we may finish well at last, and leave this World with such believing Views and Prospects of a blessed Immortality, as were so remarkable a Support to our deceased Brother, *when heart and flesh failed him*.⁴

AND as for you, the dear People of his Charge, who were still *in his heart to live and to die with you*,⁵ may you often be recollecting what you have heard from him in the Pulpit, and heard and seen in

¹ 2 Sam. iii. 38, 39. ² 2 Sam. i. 23, 26. ³ 1 Cor. xi. 1.
⁴ Psal. lxxiii. 26. ⁵ 2 Cor. vii. 3.

in private Conversation. Let me, in a particular manner, recommend to you a due Attention to his dying Advices; * better, I am sure, cannot be given to you: Let them live in your Practice, though he is dead. This will be the most substantial and important Way of paying Respect to his Memory, and turn to a much better Account than the mentioning his Name with the highest Marks of Affection, while his Counsels are slighted and forgotten. Remember that he was a Friend to you, not only *in Word* and Profession, but in *Deed and in Truth*; and assure yourselves of this, that if you conduct yourselves by those wise and holy Counsels, which are founded not merely in human Prudence, but on the Word of God, tho' your dear and honoured Pastor be dead, you will find yourselves still safe and happy in the Care of the great *shepherd of Israel, who is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.*¹ To him I cordially recommend you, and hope and trust, through his Grace, that the Sorrows of this Day will, ere long, be swallowed up in that Joy with which you shall meet him, when he comes publicly to bestow on our dear Friend, and on every faithful Minister and Christian, *a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*² Amen.

* N. B. This refers to a very pious, affectionate, and judicious Letter which Mr. *Saunders* left to be read publicly to the Congregation after this Sermon; several Copies of which have since been distributed amongst them; and which, 'tis hoped, they will frequently review; particularly that they may act upon them in the Choice of a Successor, to which these Advices peculiarly refer.

¹ Heb. xiii. 8.

² 1 Pet. i. 4.

F I N I S.



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